



South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs South Dakota Department of the Military



BULTJE BEGINS HER SDJF TREK ACROSS THE

Recently, SDDVA's Erin Bultje was named executive director of South Dakota Joining Forces (SDJF).

SDJF's mission is to serve veterans, military, and family members in South Dakota and help them navigate the maze of services and to get them through the right door at the right time

As the new executive director, Bultje was instrumental in designing a new logo and a new website (<http://sdjf.sd.gov/>). She will also be using Twitter and Instagram to communicate with her partners.

"Identifying resources and compiling that information was the very reason SDJF was developed," said Bultje. "I am extremely excited about the possibilities that this initiative will have in our state."

Bultje notes that her tenure at South Dakota Department Veterans Affairs and her five years of military service energizes her to work with our veterans and their families in obtaining their benefits.

Bultje encourages everyone to view SDJF's website. This site has been designed to be a "database" of resources that the public can look at and get information from in terms of what is available to them at county, tribal, statewide, or national level – a one-stop shop!

Bultje is hopeful that each county will designate a SDJF leader to be the point of contact she can work with and learn more about the needs of their community, as well as what resources they have. Her goal is to make sure the 267,000 constituents that make up our veterans, military, and family members in this great state are afforded the knowledge of what resources are available to them when the needs emerge.



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FULFILLING OUR NATION'S PROMISE

The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) announced today that the remains of a U.S. serviceman, recently accounted for from World War II, are being returned to his family for burial with full military honors.

Marine Corps Pvt. Archie W. Newell, 22, of Aberdeen, South Dakota, will be buried December 8, in Arlington National Cemetery, near Washington, D.C. In November 1943, Newell was assigned to Company C, 2nd Tank Battalion, 2nd Marine Division, which landed against stiff Japanese resistance on the small island of Betio in the Tarawa Atoll of the Gilbert Islands, in an attempt to secure the island. Over several days of intense fighting at Tarawa, approximately 1,000 Marines and Sailors were killed and more than 2,000 were wounded, but the Japanese were virtually annihilated. Newell was killed on the first day of the battle, Nov. 20, 1943.

Despite the heavy casualties suffered by U.S. forces, military success in the battle of Tarawa was a huge victory for the U.S. military because the Gilbert Islands provided the U.S. Navy Pacific Fleet a platform from which to launch assaults on the Marshall and Caroline Islands to advance their Central Pacific Campaign against Japan.

In the immediate aftermath of the fighting on Tarawa, U.S. service members who died in the battle were buried in a number of battlefield cemeteries on the island. The 604th Quartermaster Graves Registration Company conducted remains recovery operations on Betio between 1946 and 1947, but Newell's remains were not identified. All of the remains found on Tarawa were sent to the Schofield Barracks Central Identification Laboratory for identification in 1947. By 1949, the remains that had not been identified were interred in the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific, known as the Punchbowl, in Honolulu.

In October 2016, DPAA disinterred Tarawa Unknown X-044 from the Punchbowl and sent to the laboratory for analysis.

To identify Newell's remains, scientists from DPAA used dental, anthropological and chest radiograph comparison analysis, which matched his records, as well as circumstantial and material evidence. DPAA is grateful to the Department of Veterans Affairs for their partnership in this recovery.

Of the 16 million Americans who served in World War II, more than 400,000 died during the war. Currently there are 72,975 service members (approximately 26,000 are assessed as possibly-recoverable) still unaccounted for from World War II. Newell's name is recorded on the Tablets of the Missing at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific, along with the other MIAs from WWII. A rosette will be placed next to his name to indicate he has been accounted for.

For additional information on the Defense Department's mission to account for Americans who went missing while serving our country, visit the DPAA website at www.dpaa.mil, find us on social media at www.facebook.com/dodpaa or call (703) 699-1420.



CHRISTMAS PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

As the holiday season approaches, let us not forget we have thousands of U.S. service members that are still in harm's way and deployed away from friends and family.

While we often feel we have enough on our hands just taking care of ourselves; reaching out and helping someone else can really change a person's perspective. I encourage all of you to send a card, a handwritten note, or a care package to someone that is deployed. In addition, invite military families to partake in your holiday activities, and ask if you can assist them in preparing for the holidays.

Many military families find themselves having to redefine the word "family" as their loved ones are often stationed far from home. Military children cope with so much: new schools, changing neighborhoods, friends who move, and deployed parents. A holiday full of laughter, shared and newly created memories would be a precious gift.

Charles Dickens said, "I will live in the past, the present, and the future. The spirits of all three shall strive within me. I will not shut out the lessons that they teach!"

It doesn't matter if you are reflecting on Christmas past, present, or future; the one commonality is traditions. It's the magic and the love that we'll always remember.

While I wouldn't trade Christmas at home with my family and friends, I will forever fondly recall my Christmas spent overseas. Sharing the holidays with my military family, gorging myself on food, improvised holiday decorations, and unique holiday shenanigans. You learn to make the most of deployments – you remember that you signed the contract to protect those around you and you realize very quickly that it's worth it to have to miss out on some holidays.

Spending the holidays apart is hard, but sharing traditions whenever possible can create special memories for everyone.

We wish you and your family a blessed holiday season and a new year of peace and happiness. As you and your family gather this holiday season, please keep our heroes (past, present, and future) in your hearts. God bless our veterans, their families, and our troops that are currently serving in harm's way.

Larry Zimmerman, Secretary
South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs



YELLOW RIBBON FOR THE 153RD

SDDVA participated in the Yellow Ribbon program this weekend for the 153rd.

SDDVA Field Officer Kevin Bowen briefed the soldiers and their families on state and federal benefits. Bowen also manned the SDDVA booth and had the opportunity to visit one-on-one with veterans and their families.



PENDERGRASS NAMED SFVAHCS CHIEF OF STAFF

Dr. Timothy L. Pendergrass is appointed to the position of Sioux Falls VA Health Care System Chief of Staff, effective January 21, 2018.

He is a retired Colonel with over 34 years of active duty military service, first with the Army and then the Air Force. Prior to joining the Department of Veterans Affairs, he was the Chief of the Medical Staff for 1800 Army and Air Force, civilian and contract licensed independent practitioners at Brooke Army Medical Center.

Dr. Pendergrass received his Bachelor of Arts, Biology in 1983 from the University of Colorado, and his Doctor of Medicine (MD) in 1987 from the F. Edward Hebert School of Medicine, Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences, Bethesda, Maryland. He completed a transitional internship at Malcolm Grow Air Force Medical Center, Maryland in addition to a Diagnostic Radiology Residence in 1998 from David Grant Air Force Medical Center, CA. Dr. Pendergrass was also a Flight Surgeon with more than 900 hours of flight time. He holds a Board Certification in Diagnostic Radiology from the American Board of Radiology.



CLAUS SIGHTINGS

Turner County VSO Tom Sparrow and his wife Madonna share their holiday spirits with South Dakota Veterans. Mr. and Mrs. Claus travel around neighboring communities bringing cheer and gifts to our heroes. There are no chimneys and sleighs, but they bring so much love and honor to our heroes!!!! Kudos Tom and Madonna!!!!!!



The Soul of Veterans:

Building Spiritual Strengths

"Finding a purpose was not a destination, but a journey. Forgiveness is a process I'm still working on."

"I am hardheaded and the group helped make it soft...I learned to take risks with supervision. Today I chose the Spiritual part, my higher power or God instead of outside influences for recovery."

"As soldiers, we rode the Freedom Bird back to the world, with our souls suspended between carnage and civilization. Tired of struggling with 30 years of night, I accepted an invitation to the Vet Center Building Spiritual Strengths group...Greeted with openness and respect, I found my North Star."

This opportunity is provided by the Sioux Falls Vet Center and Sioux Falls VAHCS Chaplain Service



The Sioux Falls Vet Center and the Sioux Falls VAHCS Chaplain Service are hosting spiritual support groups for Veterans who have survived difficult and/or traumatic experiences.

Building Spiritual Strength groups help Veterans reduce spiritual and psychological distress and use meditative practices such as prayer and reading to aid in healing and readjustment.

A group for veterans will begin Tuesday, January 16, 2018 at the Vet Center. Group members must commit to meeting once a week for eight weeks and will end March 6, 2018. This group is open to all Veterans.

If you are interested in participating in the group, contact the Sioux Falls Vet Center.

January 16, 2018 to March 6, 2018
Tuesdays from 2-4PM

Sioux Falls Vet Center
3200 W 49th St.

Contact: Please RSVP by calling 605-330-4552.



VABHHCS TO HOST VETERANS TOWN HALL

The United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Black Hills Health Care System (VABHHCS) will host a Veteran Town Hall Meeting on December 12, 2017, at VFW Post 1681, 2701 North 10th St. in Gering, Nebraska, beginning at 6:00 p.m. (MT).

Veterans, family members, survivors, and the public are invited to attend. The meetings are intended to provide an open forum for VA leaders to hear directly from beneficiaries. This Town Hall is part of an ongoing effort to regularly meet with Veterans across the health care system.

"All Veterans and their families are encouraged to come out and bring questions or concerns about VA health care," said Sandra Horsman, VA BHHCS Director. "Town Halls are a great way to learn about what is working well and ways we can improve our services." Staff will be available to respond to a range of questions including the Veterans Choice Program and local clinic services.

Before the Town Hall there will be an opportunity for Veterans to meet one-on-one with VA staff to answer questions about their health care benefits and services and eligibility. Veterans can stop by any time between 5:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. The Town Hall will begin at 6:00 p.m.

For more information about this event, please contact Teresa Forbes, Public Affairs Officer at (605) 720-7451.

VETERANS ID CARDS

The VA is receiving numerous questions about the new Veterans ID Cards.

The VA has created a YouTube video that is available to the public. <https://youtu.be/LqO0Sh48T2o>
The key message is: "Veterans do not need to apply for this card if they already have another card that indicates they are a Veteran, e.g., Veterans Health ID cards, retired military ID cards, or drivers licenses with Veteran designation on them.



It can be used instead
of your DD-214

STATEMENT BY VA SECRETARY SHULKIN — PERMANENT COMMUNITY CARE LEGISLATION

President Donald J. Trump is working to ensure his Administration fulfills its commitment to America's veterans so they receive the care they deserve. Under the President's leadership, we have enacted major reform bills including Accountability and Whistleblower Protection, the Forever GI Bill, and Appeals Modernization, among others.

I am pleased that Congress is working on the last piece of business this year in considering proposals for permanent authorization of community care for veterans. As we have made clear for many months, Congress needs to pass a bill this year to help our veterans get the care they need and have earned through their service and sacrifice to our country.

We are pleased to see key provisions of the Administration's CARE proposal to expand veterans' choice in their care — and improve the VA's ability to deliver that care — included in multiple bills under consideration by Congress. We appreciate the Senate's recent progress under Senator Johnny Isakson's leadership in reporting a bill out of the Veterans' Affairs Committee, and the introduction of an additional CARE proposal by Sens. John McCain and Jerry Moran, and we look forward to working with Chairman Phil Roe in the House to help advance and improve their efforts.

While a limited number of legislative days remain on the calendar, we are hopeful that both the Senate and House can reach agreement on a bill before the end of the session. To ensure our veterans receive uninterrupted care, we are open to a short term, very limited extension of funding for the existing program to allow sufficient time for a final agreement to come together.

One way or another, I remain confident that Veterans will soon see bipartisan legislation that will greatly improve their care by providing them with better choice in selecting their best possible healthcare options.

VA AND HUMANE SOCIETY OF UNITED STATES ANNOUNCE PARTNERSHIP

The United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced a partnership with the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) to encourage veterans to consider pet ownership and volunteer opportunities with community organizations, including local animal shelters and humane societies in an effort to pair veterans with rescued animals.

This announcement represents the latest example of the VA's commitment to working closely with nonprofit organizations and other community partners to identify new and innovative ways to support veterans' health and well being through this initiative.

"There are many benefits to pet ownership both for veterans in need of companionship and for animals in need of good homes," said VA Secretary Dr. David J. Shulkin. "The greatest benefit for both can be a more fulfilled quality of life. We are pleased to work with the Humane Society on this important initiative and excited about its potential to create more opportunities to serve."

The VA and the HSUS will build model programs and networks with community organizations in order to establish connections with local VA medical facilities, making it easier to link veterans with animals ready for adoption in their local communities.

FLAG RAISED AT STATE VETERANS HOME



Veterans, community leaders, military personnel, residents, and staff gathered in front of the Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home Thursday as the 20 x 38 foot Garrison flag was raised for the first time. The flag pole was donated by the Veterans of Foreign Wars Department and Auxiliary of South Dakota. And the flag was donated by the VFW 3442 Custer Post.

Our sincere thanks to these



great partners who donated this magnificent gift to our Home.

SDDVA DONS THE RED

Staff from SDDVA's Pierre Office, along with Governor Leslie Jensen, donned the RED in support of South Dakota Army National Guard's 200th Engineer Company Bridge Training Team currently deployed to the Middle East.

R.E.D. (Remember Everyone Deployed) gives us a chance to honor and remember all our heroes who are deployed.



Upcoming Events

Dec 7—Pearl Harbor Day Remembrance—Custer Senior Citizens Center—2:00 pm (MT)
Dec 9—Sioux Falls Stampede Military Appreciation Night—7:05 pm (CT)
Dec 11—SD Wreaths Across America program—Capitol Lake—Pierre—11:00 am (CT)
Dec 12—SDDVA Mini Conference via Skype—10:00 am (CT)
Dec 12—VABHHCS Veterans Town Hall—VFW Post 1681, 2701 North 10th St, Gering, NE—6:00 pm (MT)
Dec 18-19—SDDVA Staff in training
December 25-26—State Offices Closed

2018

Jan 1—Staff Offices Closed
Jan 9—Governor's State of the State Address—1:00 pm (CT)
Jan 10—SD Veterans Commission Meeting—RedRossa in Pierre—9:00 am (CT)
Jan 10—SDDVA/Veterans Council Legislative Reception—RedRossa in Pierre—5:00—8:00 pm (CT)
Jan 18—SD American Legion Legislative Reception—Post 8—Pierre—5:00 pm (CT)
Jan 28-29—VFW Legislative Conference—Ft. Pierre AmericInn
Jan 29—VFW Legislative Reception—AmericInn—Ft. Pierre—6:00 pm—7:30 pm (CT)
Feb 16-18 American Legion Mid Winter Conference—Oacoma
Feb 23-25 Vietnam Veterans & Era Reunion—Ramada Inn—Mitchell
Mar 4-8 National VFW Conference—Washington, DC
Apr 27-29—DAV State Convention—The Lodge—Deadwood
Jun 7-10—American Legion State Convention—Spearfish
Jun 14-17—VFW State Convention—Sioux Falls
Jul 14-17—DAV National Convention—Reno, NV
Aug 20-24—SDDVA Benefits School—Ramkota—Pierre
Aug 20-24—American Legion National Convention—Minneapolis, MN

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